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To: Kris Van Lengen, JD, AICP, Community Planning Manager, Collier County Growth Management
From: David Farmer, PE, AICP, CEO, Metro Forecasting Models
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Re: Collier County RLSA ideal future town size

Collier County RLSA Ideal Future Town Size

Introduction

The Collier Interactive Growth Model project began with detailed research of existing facilities used or required to support the community. Elementary schools, community parks, fire/EMS stations and grocery anchored shopping centers were identified as serving roughly the same population of 14,000-18,000 people.

On average a cluster of 14,000-18,000 residents require/support:

- 1 Fire Station
- 1 Elementary School
- 1 Neighborhood/Community Park
- 1 Grocery store/Neighborhood Shopping Center

A community needs many different things to support a high quality of life. Historically villages grew around a focal point or town square where daily needs could be met including interaction with fellow residents and essential services. These communities grew radially from the town square where density generally decreased the further one traveled from the center of town eventually disseminating into suburban neighborhoods and eventually agricultural areas.

All too often planners and policy makers think in terms of single family and multifamily housing units as being silos of differentiation - either "this" or "that". The reality is housing falls along a spectrum where the composition of unit size, style and ownership type varies as well as occupancy, demographics and vacancy rates.

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To create an efficient and compact community, an idealized community would range from 14,000-18,000 people depending upon the demographic make-up of the resident population. Households with an older demographic means smaller household sizes, fewer school aged children, and a higher seasonal vacancy rate with much more free time to travel. A good example of how demographics impact a community is the City of Naples which has a median age of 65, a household size of 1.95 and a seasonal vacancy rate of 33% (meaning about 1/3 of all housing is vacant for 181 days per year or more) and 4.7% of the population is comprised of school aged children. Households with a younger demographic generally mean a higher percent of the population is school aged children with greater need for public schools and parks/fields for sports. Golden Gate Estates has a median age of 32, a household size of 3.08, a seasonal vacancy rate of 3% and 14.8% of the population is comprised of school aged children.

For the past 20 years, 25-28 percent of all housing units have been occupied by renters according to Census data for Lee and Collier Counties. Renter occupied multifamily housing, defined here as two or more units in the same structure, comprise 40% of all multifamily units.

Census data research indicates rental multifamily housing has a higher household size of 3.03 persons per unit versus owner occupied multifamily housing with a household size of 2.40 per unit. Rental multifamily units often means lower seasonal vacancy rates, especially in Southwest Florida. Single family housing units are more difficult to generalize when it comes to household size and vacancy rates other than homes closer to the coast tend to have fewer people per household and higher seasonal vacancy rates due to an older and more affluent demographic makeup. A noted observation is multistory housing units with stairs including traditional homes and townhomes tend to have younger residents and families.

Residential Uses

The number of housing units needed to support 15,000+/- residents (assuming an average household size of 2.34 and a blended vacancy rate of 12%) would be about 7,300 units. Unincorporated Collier County has a ratio of single/multifamily units of 1:1 indicating a breakdown of about 3,650 single family units and 3,650 multifamily units. To encourage a diversity of future resident demographics the single family homes should include traditional single story and multistory



homes as well. Traditional single story homes tend to be more expensive and generally require larger lots

than multistory homes. Land costs are a contributing factor to housing affordability, therefore less land per unit can reduce housing costs. Multistory homes including townhomes tend to accommodate more housing units per acre and be less expensive to own and maintain than traditional homes.

To encourage a diverse demographic, single family homes might range from 3 units per acre for traditional homes and up to 8 units per acre for townhomes or attached single family product. Home prices are strongly influenced by the cost of the land tied up in the lot. The logical approach to maintaining home affordability is to then allow for smaller lot sizes and encourage multiple stories to accommodate larger homes for families.

One approach to accomplish a diverse assortment of single family housing options is to plan as follows:

- 1/3 of homes to be single story on a variety of lot sizes with a maximum lot width of 75 feet
- 1/3 of homes will be multiple stories on lots with a maximum lot width of 50 feet
- 1/3 of homes to be attached or townhomes with a maximum lot width of 25 feet.

The above approach would lead to about 1,200 single story homes occupying +/- 250-300 acres including roads but excluding lakes and preserves. Similarly, about 1,200 multistory homes would occupy 200-250 acres. The 1,200 townhome and attached units would occupy 150-200 acres. In total, the single family housing units will require about 750 acres without water management and consume about 900 acres when accounting for lakes and other flood control features.

Multifamily units could range from 10-15 units per acre and potentially up to 20 units per acre in strategic locations. The approach to allocating rental and owner-occupied multifamily units is as follows:

- 1/3 of units to be dedicated for sale
- 1/3 of units dedicated for rent
- 1/3 to be open to covert from owned to rental depending upon the demands of the market place

Using an average density of 10 units per acre for 3,650 units would require 365-400 acres excluding water management preserves and buffers and approximately 500 acres when these features are included. The overall development pattern of the community would be composed of interconnected neighborhoods varying between lower densities and higher densities. Individual neighborhoods may consist of similar product types of 100-400 units each. Multiple neighborhoods of 1,500-2,000 units each would have their own community facility where a recreation, convenience shopping and community business would be conducted by residents. Four of these aggregated communities would form the residential component of the village. These four communities would surround a village center area.

The total land area required to accommodate approximately 7,300 housing units is 1,400 acres for the residential component of the village. This area includes the local roads and water management to support the housing but does not include land for common use (i.e. a community gathering facility or recreation such as tennis courts or golf).

Village Center Area

The village center area will provide for the day-to-day needs of residents and visitors. To accommodate the various commercial, civic and governmental uses about 200-300 acres should be reserved for the village center. A village consisting of approximately 15,000 residents will require a variety of vendors and large enough building areas to support daily life and encourage a higher than typical internal capture rate.



A portion of the total commercial demand is comprised of needs for goods and services by residents and visitors. Some types of goods and services are needed frequently such as groceries and banks by most adult residents. Other common types of commercial including restaurants and health clinics are used less frequently but generally have strong demand and can be supported with this modest population. The demand for commercial building area to support a village center with a grocery store, restaurants, shops, office space and local government ranges from 300,000-400,000 sf of building area. The village center should provide for incorporation of some of the higher density multifamily units either as a mixed-use area or at least directly adjacent to the commercial areas. Approximately 30-50 acres should be dedicated for these non-residential uses.

Civic and governmental uses including fire, police, EMS, parks & rec, schools will be a vital part of village life and incorporated into the village center area allowing for high visibility and access for all residents. These supporting land uses will require 40-50 acres.

Industrial uses should be provided within the village to allow for new business and associated employment for a healthy local economy. To allow for future flexibility, between 100-200 acres should be allocated for economic development as the village grows and contribution to the local tax base. Some of these more intense land uses may be located closer to major transportation corridors at the edge of the village while other less intensive uses might be included as part of the village center area.